

THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING CONNECTION



HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS

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This has been adapted from a publication by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing, titled, "A Good Place to Live".

INTRODUCTION

The Supportive Housing Connection (SHC) is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS) and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) to administer NJDHS rental subsidies and connect people served by DHS to a wide pool of quality housing opportunities across the state. Additionally, the SHC conducts inspections of participating housing units to ensure their physical integrity and compliance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Quality Standards (HQS). The SHC also provides resident inquiry resolution services for tenants and landlords as needed.

Having a good place to live is important. Through the Supportive Housing Connection (SHC), we will help you to rent a good place to call your home. You are free to choose any house or apartment you like, as long as it meets certain requirements for quality. Under the SHC, the housing cannot cost more than rents approved by DHS for its programs.

The Housing Quality Standards apply to all housing that receives subsidies through the SHC. Please note that housing that is licensed by DHS may have additional requirements related to the physical facility and that all licensed housing must comply with DHS licensing standards.

HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS

Housing quality standards help to insure that your home will be safe, healthy, and comfortable. Under the SHC there are two kinds of housing quality standards:

Things that a home must have in order to be approved by the SHC and additional things that you should think about for the special needs of your own family. These are items that you can decide.

The SHC allows you to choose a house or apartment that you like. It may be where you are living now or somewhere else. The must have standards are very basic items that every apartment must have. But a home that has all of the must have standards may still not have everything you need or would like. With the help of the SHC, you should be able to afford a good home, so you should think about what you would like your home to have. You may want a big kitchen or a lot of windows or a first floor apartment. Worn wallpaper or paint may bother you. Think of these things as you are looking for a home. Please take the time to read A Good Place to Call Home. If you would like to stay in your present home, use this booklet to see if your home meets the housing quality standards.

If you want to move, use it each time you go to look for a new house or apartment, and good luck in finding your good place to call home.

Read each section carefully. After you find a place to live and the unit has passed inspection, you can start the Lease Approval process. You may find a place you like that has some problems with it. Check with The SHC about what to do, since it may be possible to correct the problems. You can reach the SHC toll free at 1-844-216-6988 or by email at: shc@njhmfa.state.nj.us.

THE REQUIREMENTS

Every house or apartment must have at least a living room, kitchen, and bathroom.

LIVING ROOM

THE LIVING ROOM MUST INCLUDE:

CEILING

A ceiling that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

WALLS

Walls that are in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging or leaning, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

ELECTRICITY

At least two electric outlets, or one outlet and one permanent overhead light fixture. Do not count table or floor lamps, ceiling lamps plugged into a socket, and extension cords: they are not permanent.

- Not acceptable are broken or frayed wiring, light fixtures hanging from wires with no other firm support (such as a chain), missing cover plates on switches or outlets, badly cracked outlets.

FLOOR

A floor that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes, missing or warped floorboards or covering that could cause someone to trip.

PAINT

- No peeling or chipping paint if you have children under the age of seven and the house or apartment was built before 1978.

WINDOW

At least one window. Every window must be in good condition.

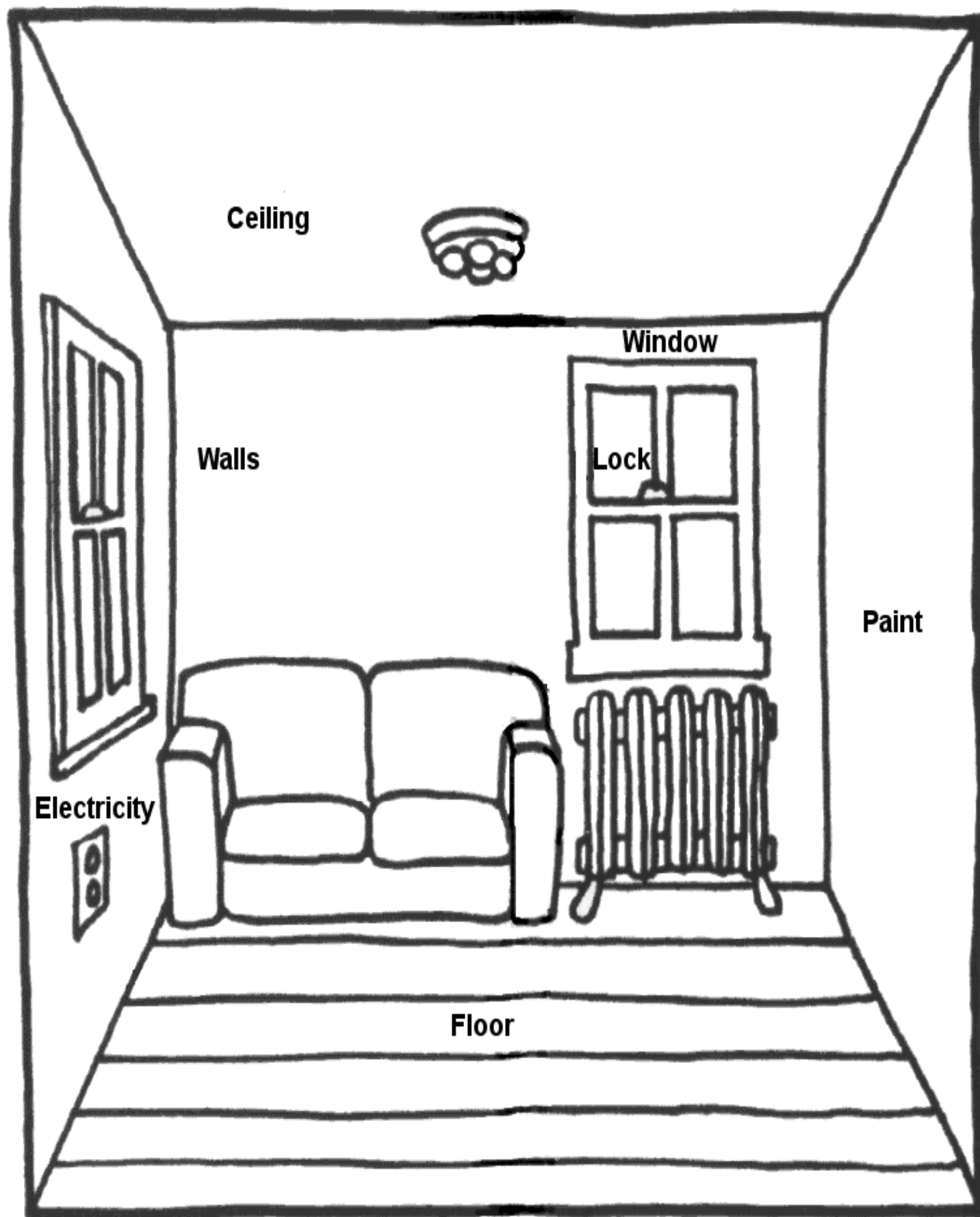
- Not acceptable are windows with badly cracked, broken or missing panes, and windows that do not shut or, when shut, do not keep out the weather.

LOCK

A lock that works on all windows and doors that can be reached from the outside, a common public hallway, a fire escape, porch or other outside place that cannot be reached from the ground. A window that cannot be opened is acceptable.

YOU SHOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT:

- **The types of locks on windows and doors**
 - Are they safe and secure?
 - Have windows that you might like to open been nailed shut?
- **The condition of the windows**
 - Are there small cracks in the panes?
- **The amount of weatherization around doors and windows**
 - Are there storm windows?
 - Is there weather stripping? If you pay your own utilities, this may be important.
- **The location of electric outlets & light fixtures**
- **The condition of the paint and wallpaper**
 - Are they worn, faded, or dirty?
- **The condition of the floor**
 - Is it scratched and worn?



THE REQUIREMENTS

Every house or apartment must have at least a living room, kitchen, and bathroom.

KITCHEN

THE KITCHEN MUST INCLUDE:

CEILING

A ceiling that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

WALLS

Walls that are in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging or leaning, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

ELECTRICITY

At least two electric outlets, or one outlet and one permanent overhead light fixture. Do not count table or floor lamps, ceiling lamps plugged into a socket, and extension cords: they are not permanent.

- Not acceptable are broken or frayed wiring, light fixtures hanging from wires with no other firm support (such as a chain), missing cover plates on switches or outlets, badly cracked outlets.

FLOOR

A floor that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes, missing or warped floorboards or covering that could cause someone to trip.

PAINT

- No peeling or chipping paint if you have children under the age of seven and the house or apartment was built before 1978.

WINDOW

At least one window.

Every window must be in good condition.

LOCK

A lock that works on all windows and doors that can be reached from the outside, a common public hallway, a fire escape, porch or other outside place that cannot be reached from the ground. A window that cannot be opened is acceptable.

STORAGE

Some space to store food.

STOVE AND OVEN

A stove (or range) and oven that works, which may be supplied by tenant.

PREPARATION AREA

Some space to prepare food.

SERVING AREA

Some space to serve food.

- A separate dining room or dining area in the living room is alright.

REFRIGERATOR

A refrigerator (may be supplied by tenant) that keeps temperatures low enough so that food does not spoil.

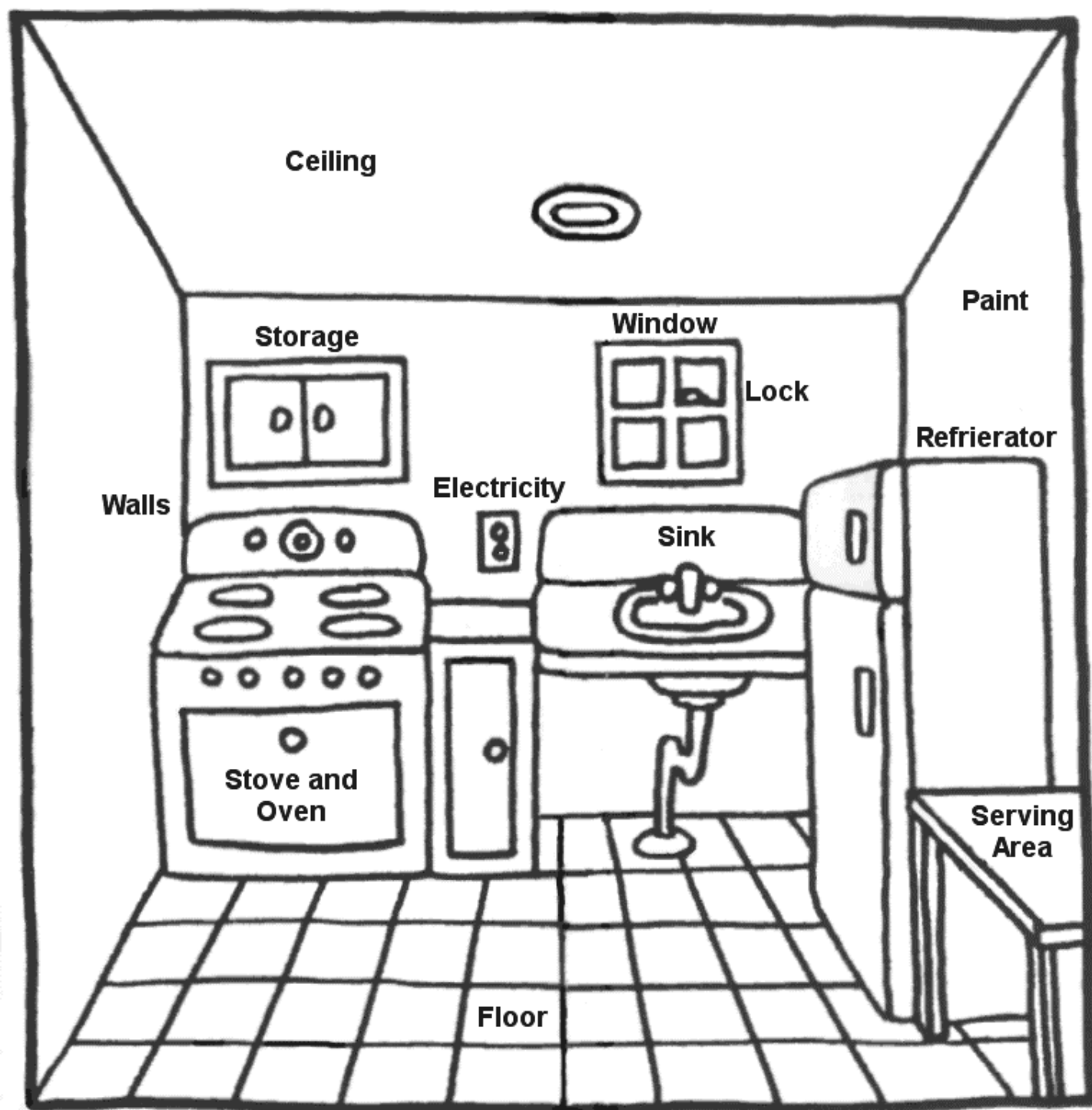
SINK

A sink with hot and cold running water.

- A bathroom sink will not satisfy this requirement.

YOU SHOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT:

- The size of the kitchen.
- The amount, location, and condition of space to store, prepare, and serve food. Is it adequate for the size of your family?
- The size, condition, and location of your sink.
- The size, condition, and location of the refrigerator. Is it adequate for the size of your family?
- Other appliances you would like provided.
- Extra outlets.



THE REQUIREMENTS

Every house or apartment must have at least a living room, kitchen, and bathroom.

BATHROOM

THE BATHROOM MUST INCLUDE:

CEILING

A ceiling that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

WALLS

Walls that are in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging or leaning, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

ELECTRICITY

At least one permanent overhead or wall light fixture.

- Not acceptable are broken or frayed wiring, light fixtures hanging from wires with no other firm support (such as a chain), missing cover plates on switches or outlets, badly cracked outlets.

TOILET

A flush toilet that works.

FLOOR

A floor that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes, missing or warped floorboards or covering that could cause someone to trip.

PAINT

- No peeling or chipping paint if you have children under the age of seven and the house or apartment was built before 1978.

WINDOW

A window that opens or a working exhaust fan.

LOCK

A lock that works on all windows and doors that can be reached from the outside, a common public hallway, a fire escape, porch or other outside place that can be reached from the ground.

SINK

A sink with hot and cold running water.

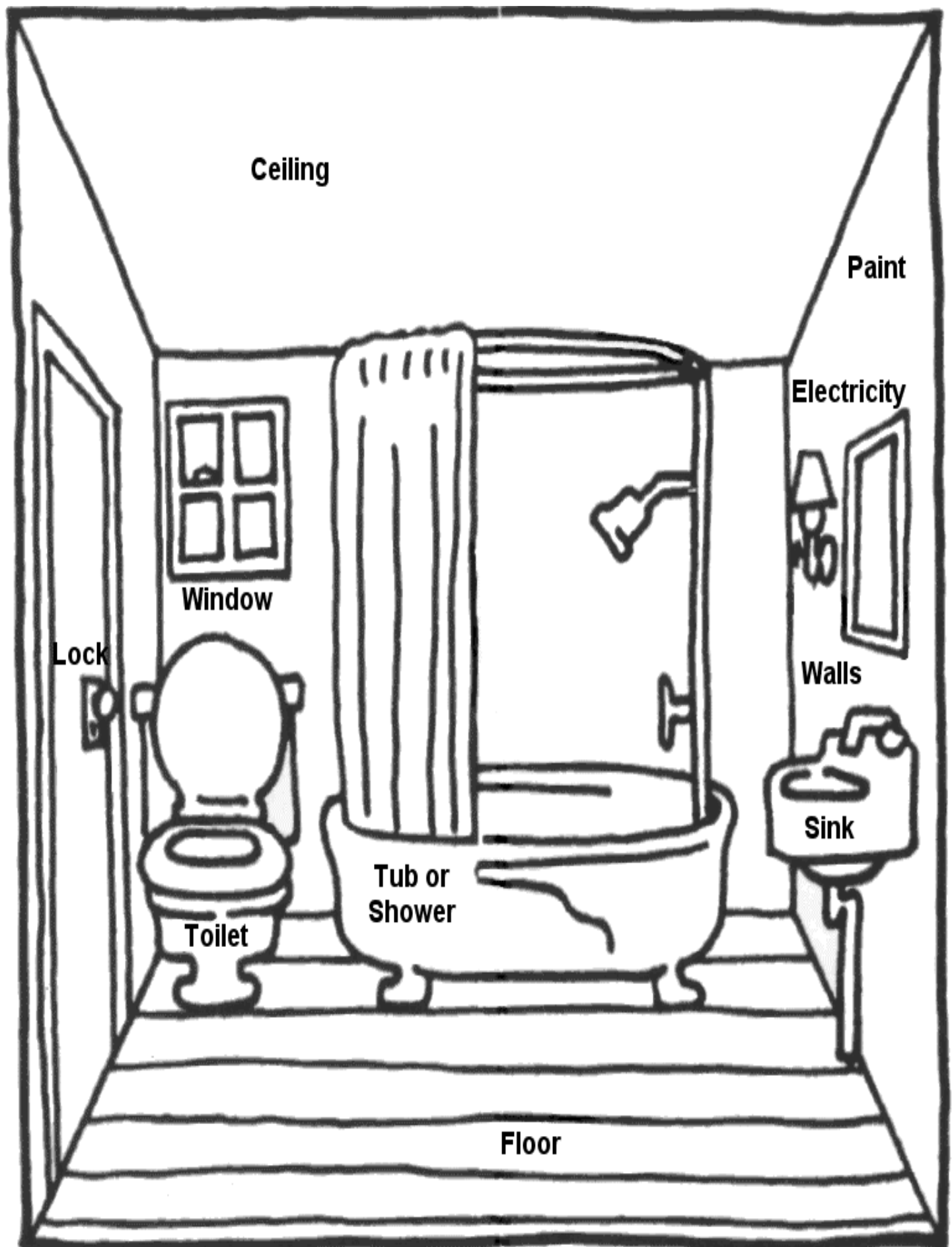
- A kitchen sink will not satisfy this requirement.

TUB OR SHOWER

A tub or shower with hot and cold running water.

YOU SHOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT:

- The size of the bathroom and the amount of privacy.
- The appearances of the toilet, sink, and shower or tub.
- A cabinet with a mirror.
- The appearance of the grout and seal along the floor and where the tub meets the wall.
- The appearance of the floor and walls.
- The size of the hot water heater.



Other rooms that are lived in include: bedrooms, dens, halls, and finished basements or enclosed, heated porches. The requirements for other rooms that are lived in are similar to the requirements for the living room as explained below.

OTHER ROOMS

OTHER ROOMS USED FOR LIVING MUST HAVE:

CEILING

A ceiling that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

WALLS

Walls that are in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes that allow drafts, severe bulging or leaning, large amounts of loose or falling surface material such as plaster.

LOCK

A lock that works on all windows and doors that can be reached from the outside, a common public hallway, a fire escape, porch or other outside place that can be reached from the ground.

PAINT

- No peeling or chipping paint if you have children under the age of seven and the house or apartment was built before 1978.

FLOOR

A floor that is in good condition.

- Not acceptable are large cracks or holes, missing or warped floorboards or covering that could cause someone to trip.

WINDOW

At least one window, which must be open-able if it was designed to be opened, must be present in every rooms used for sleeping. Every window must be in good condition.

- Not acceptable are windows with badly cracked, broken or missing panes, and windows that do not shut or, when shut, do not keep out the weather.

ELECTRICITY IN BEDROOMS

Same requirement as for living room

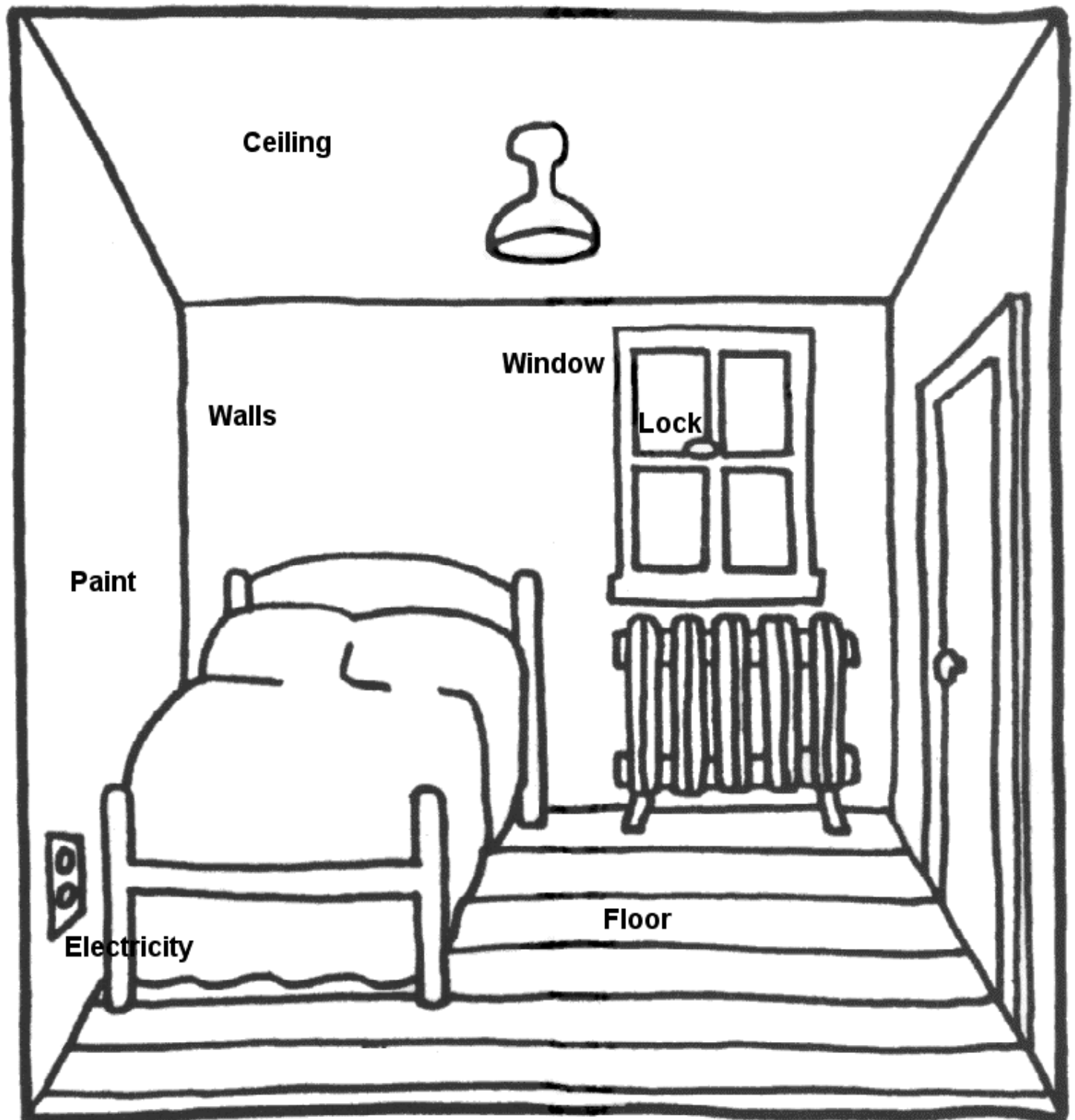
In All Other Rooms Used for Living: There is no specific standard for electricity, but there must be either natural illumination (a window) or an electric light fixture or outlet.

YOU SHOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT:

- **What you would like to do with the other rooms.**
 - Can you use them the way you want to?
- **The type of locks on windows and doors.**
 - Are they safe and secure?
 - Have windows that you might like to open been nailed shut?
- **The condition of the windows.**
 - Are there small cracks in the panes?
- **The location of electric outlets and light fixtures.**
- **The amount of weatherization windows.**
 - Are there storm windows?
 - Is there weather-stripping? If you pay your own utilities, this may be important.
- **The condition of the paint and wallpaper.**
 - Are they worn, faded, or dirty?
- **The condition of the floors.**
 - Are they scratched and worn?

OTHER ROOMS THAT ARE NOT LIVED IN MAY BE:

A utility room for washer and dryer, basement or porch. These must be checked for security and electrical hazards and other possible dangers (such as walls or ceilings in danger of falling), since these items are important for the safety of your entire apartment. You should also look for other possible dangers such as large holes in the walls, floors, or ceilings, and unsafe stairways. Make sure to look for these things in all other rooms not lived in.



BUILDING EXTERIOR, PLUMBING & HEATING

THE BUILDING MUST HAVE:

ROOF

A roof in good condition that does not leak, with gutters and downspouts, if present, in good condition and securely attached to the building.

- Evidence of leaks can usually be seen from stains on the ceiling inside the building.

OUTSIDE HANDRAILS

Secure handrails on any extended length of stairs (e.g. generally four or more steps) and any porches, balconies, or decks that are 30 inches or more above the ground.

WALLS

Exterior walls that are in good condition, with no large holes or cracks that would let a great amount of air get inside.

FOUNDATION

A foundation in good condition that has no serious leaks.

WATER SUPPLY

A plumbing system that is served by an approvable public or private water supply system. Ask the manager or owner.

SEWAGE

A plumbing system that is connected to an approvable public or private sewage disposal system. Ask the manager or owner.

CHIMNEYS

No serious leaning or defects (such as big cracks or many missing bricks) in any chimneys.

PAINT

No cracking, peeling, or chipping paint if you have children under the age of seven and the house or apartment was built before 1978.

- This includes exterior walls, stairs, decks, porches, railings, windows, and doors.

COOLING

Some windows that open, or some working ventilation or cooling equipment that can provide air circulation during warm months.

PLUMBING

Pipes that are in good condition, with no leaks and no serious rust that causes the water to be discolored.

WATER HEATER

A water heater located, equipped, and installed in a safe manner. Ask the manager.

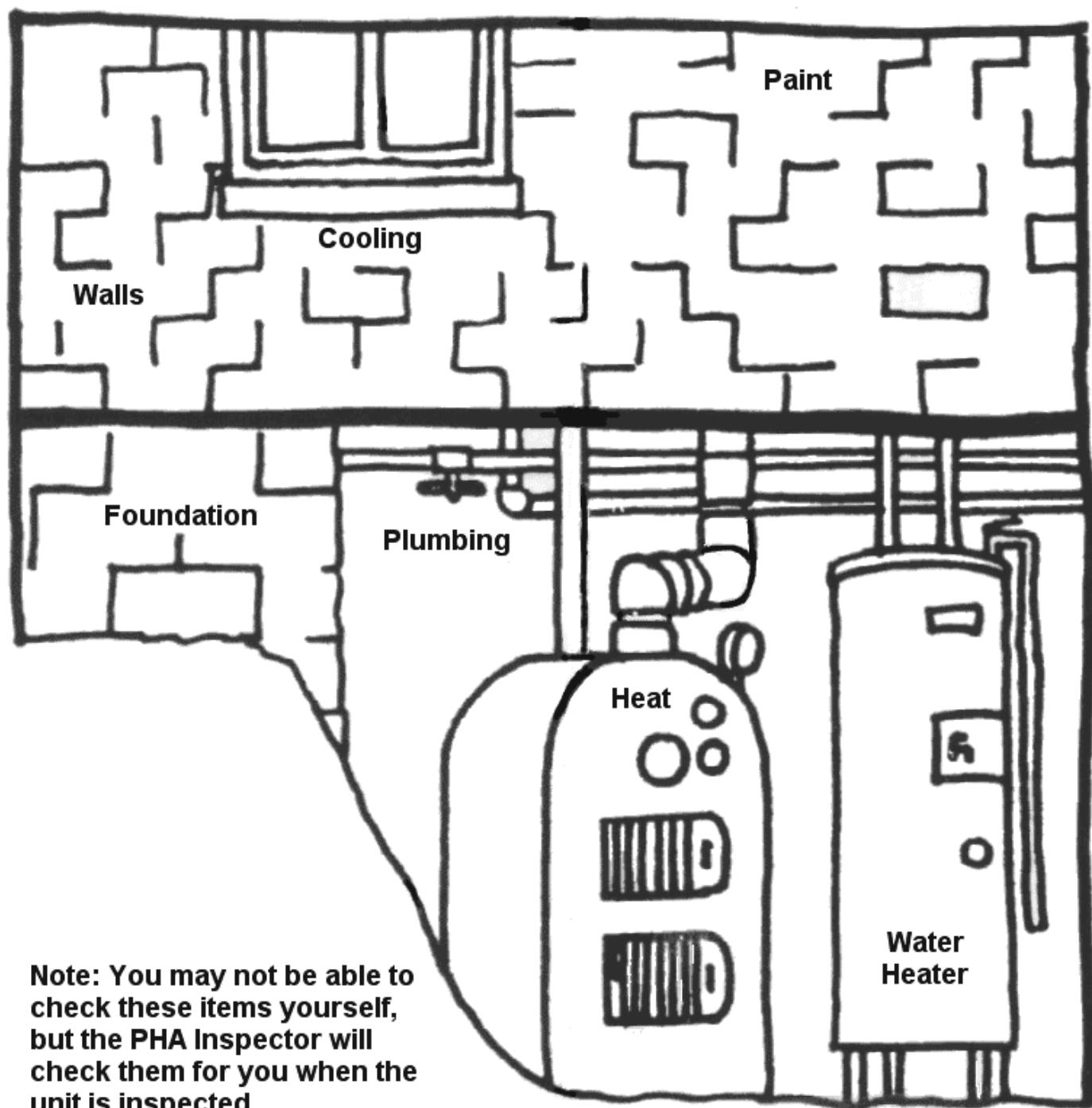
HEAT

Enough heating equipment so that the unit can be made comfortably warm during cold months.

- Not acceptable are space heaters (or room heaters) that burn oil or gas and are not vented to a chimney. Space heaters that are vented may be acceptable if they can provide enough heat.

YOU SHOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT:

- How well maintained the apartment is.
- The type of heating equipment.
 - Will it be able to supply enough heat for you in the winter, to all rooms used for living?
- Air circulation or type of cooling equipment (if any).
 - Will the unit be cool enough for you in the summer?
- The amount and type of weatherization and its affect on utility costs.
 - Is there insulation?
 - Are there storm windows?
 - Is there weather-stripping around the windows and doors?



Note: You may not be able to check these items yourself, but the PHA Inspector will check them for you when the unit is inspected.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

THE BUILDING AND SITE MUST HAVE:

SMOKE DETECTORS

At least one working smoke detector on each level of the unit, including the basement. If any member of your family is hearing-impaired, the smoke detector must have an alarm designed for hearing-impaired persons.

FIRE EXITS

The building must provide an alternate means of exit in case of fire (such as fire stairs or exit through windows, with the use of a ladder if windows are above the second floor).

ELEVATORS

Make sure the elevators are safe and work properly.

ENTRANCE

An entrance from the outside or from a public hall, so that it is not necessary to go through anyone else's private apartment to get into the unit.

STAIRS AND HALLWAYS

Interior stairs with railings, and common hallways that are safe and in good condition. Minimal cracking, peeling or chipping in these areas.

LIGHTS

Lights that work in all common hallways and interior stairs.

NEIGHBORHOOD

No dangerous places, spaces, or things in the neighborhood such as:

- Nearby buildings that are falling down
- Unprotected cliffs or quarries
- Fire hazards
- Evidence of flooding

GARBAGE

No large piles of trash and garbage inside or outside the unit, or in common areas such as hallways. There must be a space to store garbage (until pickup) that is covered tightly so that rats and other animals cannot get into it. Trash should be picked up regularly.

POLLUTION

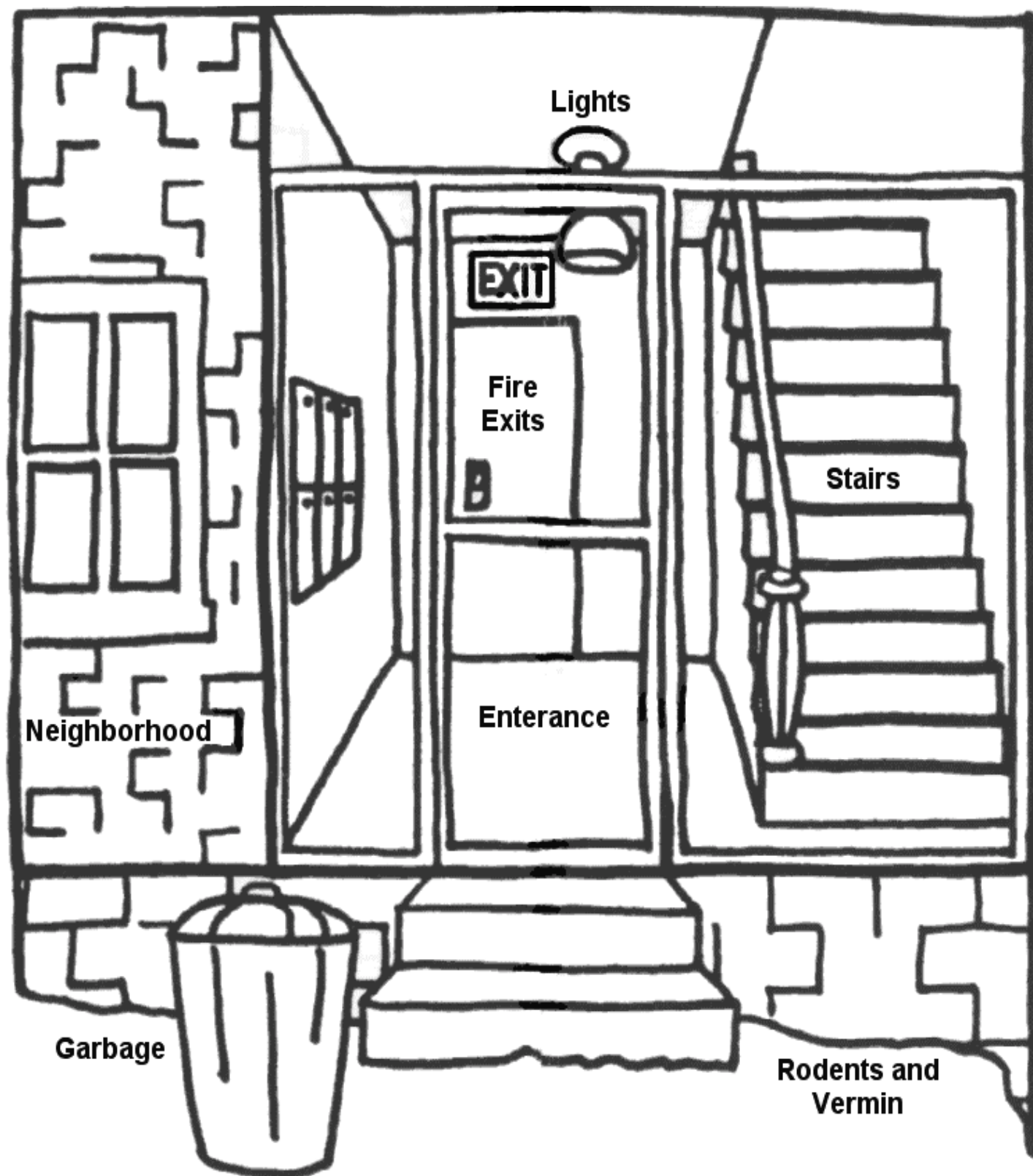
No serious air pollution, such as exhaust fumes or sewer gas.

RODENTS AND VERMIN

No sign of rats or large numbers of mice or vermin (like roaches).

YOU SHOULD ALSO THINK ABOUT:

- The type of fire exit.
 - Is it suitable for your family?
- How safe the house or apartment is for your family.
- The presence of screens and storm windows.
- Be sure to read the lead-based paint brochure given to you by the owner, especially if the housing or apartment is older (built before 1978).
- Will the cost of tenant-paid utilities be affordable and is the unit energy-efficient?
- Services in the neighborhood.
 - Are there stores nearby?
 - Are there schools nearby?
 - Are there hospitals nearby?
 - Is there transportation nearby?
- Are there job opportunities nearby?



Note: You may not be able to check these items listed here yourself, but the PHA Inspector will check them for you when the unit is inspected.

NEXT STEPS...

Now that you have finished this booklet, you know that for a house or apartment to be a good place to live and call home, it must meet two kinds of housing quality standards:

- Things it must have in order to be approved for the Supportive Housing Connection program.
- Additional things that you should think about for the special needs of your family.

You know that these standards apply in six areas of a house or apartment.

1. Living Room
2. Kitchen
3. Bathroom
4. Other Rooms
5. Building Exterior, Plumbing and Heating
6. Health and Safety

You know that when a house or apartment meets the housing quality standards, it will be safe, healthy, and comfortable home for your family. It will be a good place to live and call home.

After you find a good place to live, you can call or email the SHC to request that an official inspection take place. The SHC will inform both you and the owner of the inspection results.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING CONNECTION

TOLL-FREE: 1-844-216-6988

EMAIL: shc@njhmfa.state.nj.us.

If the house or apartment passed the inspection, the SHC will be able to authorize the execution of a lease. There may still be some items that you or the SHC would like improved. If so, you and the SHC may be able to bargain for the improvements when you sign the lease. If the owner is not willing to do the work, perhaps you can get him or her to pay for the materials and do it yourself.

If the house or apartment fails, you and/or the SHC may try to convince the owner to make the repairs so it will pass. The likelihood of the owner making the repairs may depend on how serious or costly they are.

If it fails, all repairs must be made, and the house or apartment must be re-inspected before any lease is signed. If the owner cannot or will not repair the house or apartment, even if the repairs are minor, you must look for another home. Make sure you understand why the house or apartment failed, so that you will be more successful in your next search.

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NOTES

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